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Concluding Paragraph Connection Decade Paper

Sequential Development 19 November 2009

Point of View

Thesis Statement

Disneyland’s Humble Beginnings.

“I could never convince the financers that Disneyland was feasible, because dreams offer too little collateral.”-Walt Disney.

I have always been a big fan of Walt Disney and the Disney Corporation. What started as a dream for the Disney Company ended up being two very successful theme parks and an unmatched resume of movies and cartoons. I believe that this company’s true hay day was in the 1950’s. It was then that Disneyland opened in Anaheim, California. Disneyland, which is the second most visited amusement park in the world (The first being The Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida), making it more than Walt Disney could have ever hoped for. I do believe that without Disneyland, the Disney Company and perhaps the world itself would not be the same as it is today. So now, I can indulge you into the world that a man, a mouse, and a dream helped build.

First off, Disneyland wasn’t the idea of a group of skilled tacticians looking to make a quick dime; it was the dream of Walt Disney himself. One sunny Sunday afternoon, Walt was in Griffith Park with his daughters (Diane and Sharon). While they were on the merry-go round, Walt was watching and had an idea. What if there was a park where adults and their children to go and have fun. Due to financial woes and poor luck, this would remain a dream until the early 1950’s. It was then that Walt started looking into an 8 acre piece of land across Riverside Drive. (Eliot, 1993) The original idea was to have a small, simple park; however, once Disney started looking at other parks and consulting his designers, the idea and the dream got much larger. In order to find the proper location, Walt hired Harrison Price, a consultant from the Stanford Research Center, to find an acceptable plot of ground that wouldn’t hinder potential growth. Harrison located the 160 acre plot of orange groves and in Anaheim, California that Walt bought immediately. Construction of Disneyland began on July 18, 1954 and there were still unanswered questions waiting to be answered.

The actual construction of Disneyland took one year and cost about 17 million dollars. (Productions) Before construction began, the orange grove the land had on it had to be taken away and some 15 houses had to be relocated. Walt’s largest concern once the actual construction was to begin was how to make his dream real. How could he make living things out of construction materials and a castle in the middle of Anaheim? Walt Disney left that task to his movie designers, and for the most part, they did rather well. If Walt didn’t agree with a design, he would do it himself. One such event was when he saw the plan for Tom Sawyer’s Island and said that his designers must have “misunderstood the idea”, so Walt took the design home and brought back his the next day. (Productions) Another problem was how to make rivers out of the sandy citrus grove soil. The answer came when they discovered a bed of native clay that acted as an inch of “cement” on the riverbed. Walt wanted the park divided into different sections: Main Street U.S.A., Adventureland, Frontierland, Fantasyland, and Tomorrowland. (Isbouts, 2001) Walt’s baby was Tomorrowland, but he was also a big advocate of Fantasyland, saying of it, “What youngster hasn’t dreamed of flying with Peter Pan over moonlit London, or tumbling into Alice’s nonsensical Wonderland? In Fantasyland, these classic stories of everyone’s youth have become realities for youngsters-of all ages- to participate in.”(Productions) It was finally time for the park to open its gates to the public.

Finally, opening day was upon the Disney staff. Opening day was meant for 6,000 invited guests and the press on July 17, 1955. However, somebody had been busy making counterfeit tickets, so by mid day; the park was flooded with people. Due to a plumbers’ strike, there was a shortage of water fountains and it is said that when Walt was asked to pick between running water for the elephants to squirt water on people on the river raft or for working fountains, he chose the elephants. (Productions) The temperature that day was a miserable 101 degrees Fahrenheit and the asphalt had not quite set. It is said that the asphalt was so sticky that ladies lost their high heeled shoes and even in one case it is said that a lap dog was lost among the asphalt, (true or not, it’s a Disney myth). There was a gas leak in Fantasyland which caused Adventureland, Fantasyland, and Frontierland to be closed for the afternoon. (Isbouts, 2001)The next day,(July 18, 1955) Disney reintroduced the park and made the 18th the Official Opening Day. People started to gather at the gates as early as 2 a.m. and the first man through the gates was David MacPherson, however, he was ticket #2. Roy O. Disney, Walt’s brother, had pre-ordered ticket #1. Things went rather smoothly this day and would continue to do so until September 1959. It was in September that Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev visited the United States for about two weeks. Nikita had two requests while visiting the country: he wanted to meet John Wayne and visit Disneyland. His request to see Disneyland was denied for security reasons and this caused him to openly question whether there were missiles hidden there. (Eliot, 1993) Walt Disney was rather upset at this because he was denied the opportunity to show off his submarine fleet to Khrushchev. (Isbouts, 2001)

In conclusion, I believe that Disneyland is truly the happiest place on Earth. With this paper, I hope that I educated you at least a little about Disneyland and gave you a glimpse into the sometimes mad mind of Walt Disney. I, for one, believe that I was successful, but that is for you to decide. This topic will always needs attention because there are so many myths out there and everyone one of them is begging to explored, and I would be more than happy to do so. The park itself keeps evolving and changing, so there will always be present day connections to fall back on when studying anything of Disney origin, especially Disneyland. I hope you enjoyed learning about the rich past of Disneyland and hope from the bottom of my heart that you too, would like to fly over moonlit London with Peter Pan or fall into Alice’s nonsensical Wonderland. As it is stated at the gates of Disneyland, “Here you leave today and enter the world of yesterday, tomorrow and fantasy.”